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**⇒BOOKS NOTICES.⇒**

*[All publications received, which relate directly or indirectly to the Old Testament, will be promptly noticed under this head. Attention will not be confined to new books; but notices will be given, so far as possible, of such old books, in this department of study, as may be of general interest to pastors and students.]*

**HISTORY OF ANCIENT EGYPT.\***

The modest preface with which the distinguished author introduces these handsome volumes to the reader, almost disarms the critic in advance. He claims for his work not the palm of original investigations into the sources of Egyptian history but only the merit of a careful collation of the most reliable translations of original documents with the latest monographs and general works relating to this subject. But such a service as this in a field as recondite as it is interesting, which is continually unfolding new treasures, is by no means of slight value. While the work on account of the progressive state of our knowledge of Egyptian antiquity will have to be continually undergoing revision, it may be confidently recommended as the best manual attainable in the English tongue at the present day. In the words of the author the work is "designed to supply an account of Ancient Egypt, combining its antiquities with its history, addressed partly to the eye, and presenting to the reader, within a reasonable compass, the chief points of Egyptian life, together with a tolerably full statement of the general course of historical events, whereof Egypt was the scene, from the foundation of the monarchy to the loss of independence." According to this plan, there are considered in the first volume such general topics as the Land, Climate and Productions, the People, their Language and Literature, their Art, Architecture, Science, Religion, Manners and Customs. The second volume, after an introductory chapter on Chronology, is entirely occupied with the history proper, closing with the Persian conquest.

It may be remarked that,

1. While many ideas are conveyed to the reader, a general impression of unity of plan and treatment is wanting. It may be too early for us to expect a philosophical treatment of Egyptian life and history. Yet no historian should fail to bring out the essential meaning which lies in the history of any nation. The relation of Egypt to the ancient world, a topic of the greatest interest and importance, fails in these volumes to obtain anything like an adequate treatment.
2. Professor Rawlinson has confined himself strictly to the narration of the facts of the history and life of ancient Egypt. With this feature of his work, as might be expected, little fault can be found. The text is amply illustrated by a map of Egypt, nine full-page plates and two hundred fifty-three wood-cuts, most of which are excellently executed. Hardly any aspect of the life, manners and customs, or religion, remains unillustrated. A list of authors quoted and a copious index will be of value to students.
3. Those who come to these volumes with the expectation of finding discussions of the relations between Israel and Egypt will be disappointed. The author

\* *History of Ancient Egypt.* By GEORGE RAWLINSON, M. A., Camden Professor of Ancient History in the University of Oxford. In two volumes, pp. 550, 567, with maps, plates and wood-cuts. Boston: S. E. Cassino, 1882.

confines himself strictly to his subject. Yet one would naturally think that more than the scanty amount of two pages might have been profitably devoted to the Exodus, an event, the effects of which upon Egypt, "were certainly far greater, as the Egyptian records testify, than we should have concluded from the Old Testament representations, since in these the attention is so constantly directed to the spiritual, that the worldly history fades in its presence."

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⇒ REVIEW NOTICES. ⇐

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In the July Number of *The Association Bulletin*, a Bi-monthly Jewish magazine, there is published a most interesting address, *Chips from a Talmudic Workshop*, delivered before the Y. M. H. A. of Philadelphia, by Rabbi Dr. M. JASTROW. He distinguishes the Mosaic Law as fundamental, as presenting the ideal to which people are to be educated; as the organic law, the constitution, not only of Israel, but of a large portion of the human race. The legislation of the Talmud, on the contrary, is the reflection of a civilization extending over seven or eight hundred years, the outcome of an existing state of society, enactments called forth by the requirements of social and commercial relations. Regarding the laws of the Talmud as conclusive evidence of the *existence* of the culture and civilization which they are intended to regulate, he shows, for example, by citations that public *schools* had been instituted while Christianity was yet in its infancy; and that the regulations of these schools were strikingly similar in many respects to those of the modern public schools, of which so much is boasted. He explains the hair-splitting tendency of Talmudical writers on the ground that, in most instances, these hair-splittings were decisions in real cases brought before the rabbis. In the midst of all the "mental wilderness" of the first six or eight centuries of the Christian era, one finds "Jewish schools in every village, Jewish colleges counting their disciples by the thousands, Jewish farmers devoting their leisure hours to studies, Jewish youths and men, twice a year, when their agricultural pursuits would allow them a vacation, streaming up to the centres of learning to stock their minds for the remainder of the year." Other chips are picked up of equal interest and importance.

In the October *Journal of Christian Philosophy*, there is reprinted, as an article, a recent tract by R. PAYNE SMITH, D. D., on *The Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch*. This problem, in his view, is no mere archæological question, but one involving the veracity of Scripture. The records of Genesis, according to this writer, were transmitted as follows: Abraham, the direct descendant of Shem, had been made the depositary of all knowledge given by God either to the antediluvian or the patriarchal world; and it is only the possession of this knowledge which will account for the monotheism which was the occasion of his departing from the midst of the idolatrous Chaldaeans. Up to the time of Abraham's departure the accounts, handed down in the Bible, had existed among the Chaldaeans in a reasonably pure form, but after this, these accounts degenerate into puerile fables. Abraham, however, carried them with him in their pure form, recorded not on tablets of clay, for these would be too heavy, but on more costly material, known to have existed. It would be comparatively easy to preserve them from this time to the age of Moses, who made use of them